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Ruby's .38 revolver to be top draw at auction

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\$100,000 is starting bid for gun that killed Oswald

The infamous .38-caliber Colt Cobra revolver used to kill President John F. Kennedy's assassin will land on the auction block in December, and probably will fetch more than \$100,000, experts said Monday.

"Nearly everything to do with the assassination is locked up in the National Archives for 75 years," said Larry Howard, co-director of the Assassination Information Center in Dallas. "There's nothing out there to buy. As far as weapons go, there are none."

"That makes this a very special, special piece."

The gun is being auctioned by Earl Ruby, brother of Jack Ruby, who gunned down presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald in the basement of

Dallas City Jail on Nov. 24, 1963, two days after Kennedy was shot to death in a downtown Dallas motorcade.

Bidding will begin at \$100,000 — a price Howard said is not unreasonable. One-third of the money from the sale will go to Doug Larson and Jim Simons — Dallas lawyers who helped Earl Ruby obtain the gun after a 23-year legal wrangle over control of Jack Ruby's estate.

The gun — which originally cost \$62.50 — "could be worth a quarter-million," said Herman Darvick, an autograph and historical documents specialist who will stage the sale.

"It has to be the most valuable gun in private hands," he said.

Howard said, "I think museums

across the country will be interested, but more likely [it will be bought] by a private gun collector."

Earl Ruby said he is selling the gun to pay outstanding bills, which include \$86,000 in back taxes against his brother's estate.

"We want to get as much money as possible from it. I hope to get \$100,000 because that will just about pay all the bills we owe," said the 76-year-old Ruby. The auction is scheduled for Dec. 26. Currently, the gun is locked in a Dallas safety deposit box.

The hat and shoes Ruby wore also will be auctioned. Each contains his name in gold in the lining. Also on sale will be telegrams sent to Ruby to congratulate him on the shooting.

Ruby was convicted of murder in 1964 and sentenced to die in the electric chair. The conviction was overturned in 1966, but before a new trial could be held, Ruby died of cancer on Jan. 3, 1967, at age 55.

Howard — whose organization will not bid on the gun — said the federal government has sealed most evidence relating to the assassination — including the Italian rifle Oswald fired from the Texas School Book Depository — in the archives until the year 2039.

A spokeswoman for The Sixth Floor — a Kennedy museum in the former Texas School Book Depository building — said the six-figure price tag is too rich for her organization.

"We don't have that kind of money," said V. Ann Gault.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.